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TRIPLE R

CONSERVATIVE MELTDOWN

Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

The First International Congress of what would become the Communist Party took place in London in 1864, and ended in bitter recriminations between the Proudhonians and Bakuninites, the two rival factions of socialists. But the Communist International went on, as a movement, to politically dominate half the world for nearly a century. It was an evil ideology, but its practitioners were true believers who took ideas seriously, knew what they wanted, and were willing to do the hard work to make it possible.

Compare that to the First International Conservative Congress, sponsored by *National Review* and a dozen think tanks, that convened in Washington, D.C., in late September. After two days of a hundred different factions droning on about this or that petty policy scheme in special-interest panels, the meeting petered out with yawns and boredom brought on by too much liquor and too long a speech by Margaret Thatcher recollecting the ancient history of her years as prime minister of some foreign country.

This is not a movement that will dominate a century. It can't even put on a decent conference. There were good people there, of course, but they were tucked away in panels on "trade" and "the budget process," which competed with other events on "empowerment" and "national greatness." There were the mandatory panels on "foreign policy," featuring the usual parade of fifth columnists intent on making sure the Constitution remains a dead letter when it comes to international relations.

There were the standard cultural critics who know nothing of the real America. They attend a drugged and drunken Rastafarian street party in Dupont Circle and conclude the culture has collapsed. (They don't know that in the rest of the country, state fairs, hard work, and Christian radio remain the norm. Moreover, they have explicitly rejected this type of culture on grounds that its too low-brow and parochial for their tastes.) The answer, they conclude, is that we should all memorize the Gettysburg Address.

This clownish behavior is old hat for conference goers on the mainstream right, but it is increasingly irrelevant to the battles that really matter, all of which involve a war to the teeth between Washington and the rest of the country. In that war, the conservative movement is on the wrong side.

What Makes a Movement

A political movement worthy of the name has three key elements: articulate leaders and spokesmen, grassroots guerilla activists, and intellectual shock troops. The three elements have different roles in the division of labor, and while they can be divided on questions of tactics and strategy, they must be united in a common goal. The anti-abortion movement has all three. So does the home-schooling movement.

Left-liberalism barely qualifies. True, it has leaders. It has grassroots support in the form of discontented special-interest groups with their hands out for other people's money. But the intellectual foundation of left-liberalism cracked with the implosion of socialism and the decay of the welfare state. These doctrines have been replaced by hatred of bourgeois prejudices and institutions. This, and the predisposition to see centralized government as God walking on earth, is

continued on page 4

INSIDE

Intelligence Briefing 2
The Seventh Sign 9
JUSTIN RAIMONDO
PK: Too Late, Too Little 11
HILARY RYAN
Conservative Non-Authorities 12
PAUL GOTTFRIED
What Happened to Nozick? 14
MICHAEL LEVIN

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INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

◆ **Finally, a Caucasian Liberation Movement**. Unfortunately, it's in the Caucasus. (*Strategic Investment*, Sept. 17, 1997)

◆ **The Nafta knot gets ever-more tangled**, with protectionists again uniting with real free-traders against the establishment. The White House thinks that "free trade" means muscling foreign countries into adopting socialistic regulations on labor and the environment. The State Department thinks it means forcing foreign countries to adopt U.S. foreign policy priorities (like barring trade with pitiful Cuba). Only the small-business community has it right: free trade is not government-to-government deals struck by ministries of finance, but the untold billions that pass border to border every day in absence of such agreements. Let the White House repeal limits on steel imports, for starters, before it starts preaching about the evils on foreign market restrictions. *Triple R* says: Down With Nafta, Again!

◆ **In the aftermath of Diana's death**, the grassroots campaign to get governments to pick up their landmines received a huge boost. It culminated in the Nobel Prize to the group that has worked for years to stop these killing machines from being spread by governments. Weirdly, conservatives criticized the prize and particularly campaign organizer and supposed leftist Jody Williams, who called Clinton a "weenie" for not signing the treaty. But Williams is merely reviving Augustinian just war theory. She told the *New York Times* of her goal to educate people "that while war may not go away in our lifetime, there are rules about how you conduct yourself in war, that if the military think they have to fight with each other, they should point the guns at each other; they should not involve all of civil society." (*New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1997)

◆ ***Triple R* opposes all government landmines**. But of course we're all for private ones. Good landmines, in fact, make good neighbors.

◆ **Ron Paul was hectored** in his office by officials of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. The international news service accuses him of being "a leading anti-Semite" because he opposes foreign aid for Israel (and everyone else) and military meddling in the Middle East (and everywhere else). Anti-Paulism at the JTA is, of course, no concern.

◆ **Excuse me, but isn't it politically incorrect to refer to "sodomy"?** Yet the immigrant allegedly assaulted by New York City cops is always said to have been "sodomized." How to prevent such incidents in the future? Keep gays off the New York City police force, and Haitians out of America.

◆ **Sheriff Dave Mattis of Wyoming has forbidden any federal agent from entering his county without permission.** That means the FBI, BATF, EPA, and IRS. Since a federal district court recognized that Wyoming is a sovereign state, and the sheriff is the highest official in the county, Mattis says that he can bar all federal agents, or ask them to leave, under the U.S. Constitution. Indeed, since his announcement, "not even the IRS has attempted to seize the property or bank account of any citizen of Big Horn County. I hope that a lot more sheriffs all across America will join me in protecting their citizens the way I am trying to do." (*Strategic Investment*, Sept. 17, 1997)

◆ **The House passed a despicable bill** in late September (220-201) giving federal clinics permission to distribute condoms and birth control pills to kids as young as 13 without parental permission (*New York Post*, Sept. 16, 1997). The culture has an enemy, and its name is government.

◆ **Conservatives who decried the Diana phenomenon**—the worldwide outpouring of grief over the death of a princess of an ancient Christian monarchy—had difficulties settling on precisely why they objected to people's reaction. Finally, thanks to David Frum of the *Weekly Standard*, they came up with this one: people should keep a stiff upper lip and not show emotion publicly. Gee, we didn't know that was a conservative position, but oh well. Then, two weeks later, when the Promise Keepers were blubbering on the mall of the nation's capital, embracing and

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promising to be more emotive in the future, conservatives were celebrating this as a return to old-fashioned values. What gives?

◆ **What an outrage, said liberals, that people were so upset by Diana's death**, when, that very week, a UN helicopter crashed in central Bosnia, killing eleven and injuring 4 others, and no one cared. Precisely.

◆ **Roger Tamraz, Hero for Our Times?** Maybe not, but at least he's upfront. The campaign donor told the gathered senators: "I go to the outer limits. Why not? You set the rules and we're following the rules. This is politics as usual." He went on: "The great politicians are very loyal to each other. If you do a favor for a politician, he won't forget you.... A lot of you will survive and go to great places."

◆ **Tamraz's tales of dealing with Clinton were hilarious**: "You think you get into the White House so you've won. Then there's a guerilla fight to get close to the president. First, the president is surrounded by the ladies, because they swoon around him.... Once you get in, you don't get the chance to get what you want." And what did he want? Waivers to place a huge pipeline in parts of the old Soviet empire. Why should the president have any say over that? There's the New World Order for you. (*New York Times*, Sept. 19, 1997)

◆ **Who calls Capitol Hill "Hallowed Ground"** and refers to Congress, various government bureaucracies, and statues of dead politicians as "monuments to faith and freedom"? No, not some leftist organization (we don't think) but the Family Research Council. They published an egalitarian *Washington Times* insert on the day of the Promise Keepers march. "A new pledge is being taken," the insert said, "a pledge in profound keeping with Lincoln's calls to prayer, with Martin Luther King's pleas for reconciliation, with the hands of our presidents laid upon the Holy Bible, with the workers whose shoulders raised these memorials to faith and freedom."

◆ **Cancer from the sun is a myth,** say British researchers. The notion has been a bonanza for sun-cream manufacturers, but there is no evidence of a link between malignant melanoma and sunshine, say two top dermatological investigators at the University of Newcastle. They point out that the growths often occur on parts of the body not exposed to sunshine, that there is evidence of an inherited predisposition, and that they occur in Japan and other cultures that do not sunbathe. "The melanoma story is largely made up," says Professor Jonathan Rees. (London *Sunday Times*, Aug. 24, 1997)

◆ **Rethinking Erastianism:** Wonder why Princess Diana's funeral service was so magnificent, and Mother Teresa's such an aesthetic mixed bag? Well, the Catholic Church had Vatican II, but Parliament refused to allow the Church of England to take the same downhill path.

◆ **When Newt Gingrich wants to sneak a bill through,** he brings it up at the last moment so no one can even read it, let alone debate it, and has it quickly passed by voice vote. A 117-page FDA law was recently shoved through this way, at the behest of the bureaucrats and the pharmaceutical industry. Only Ron Paul protested. He discovered that the legislation contained new, international restrictions on vitamin and mineral supplements.

◆ **Who planned the terrorist suicide bombings in Jerusalem?** According to the London *Times* (Oct. 17, 1997), "10 Jewish residents of Jerusalem have been arrested for allegedly supplying explosives to Palestinians for use in terrorist attacks against Jewish targets." Israeli security sources told the *Times* that "a ring of Jews had been found apparently supplying weaponry to Palestinian extremists to enable them to continue their terror campaign designed to sabotage the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace accord."

◆ **Our future?** Provincetown, Mass., will now start its pro-gay curriculum in kindergarten, as well as institute quotas for "sexual minorities," says Susan Fleming, superintendent of schools for the famously p.c. town. The "anti-bias" efforts are "truly a milestone," says the gay head of the PTA, Jeannine Cristina, the "mother of a 7-year-old biracial girl." The schools will now be fully dedicated to teaching "students, parents, teachers, and the community at large to combat racism, sexism, ableism, classism, heterosexism, and homophobia," she adds. Earlier, Cristina had sought fuller recognition for Black History Month. "While she is white, her daughter is half-black, the result of Miss Cristina's receiving sperm from a black man when she was artificially inseminated." Added high-school teacher John Ryan, the plan is to "end the dominance of teaching from the point of view of white Europeans who are also very heterosexual, very Christian, very male." (*Washington Times*, Aug. 21, 1997)

◆ **Was the hurricane-producing "*El Niño*" really named after the Christ Child?** Of course not, despite what the media claim. Latin American Catholics would never have done any such thing. The periodic weather shift called *El Niño* (Spanish for "the little boy" as well as for the Baby Jesus) was actually named after a 19th century Philippino midget known for his ability to shoot poisonous darts at a terrific pace.

◆ **Even we hesitate to be this politically incorrect**, but here goes: Merry Christmas. RRR

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CONSERVATIVE MELTDOWN from page 1

the only source of unity for the left.

But if left-liberalism is in a bad way, conservatism has cracked up. Its creed is vaguely anti-government, but its intellectuals and leaders have been cozying up to government power for more than four decades. Its philosophical core is Christian, but its political positions are wrapped up with the civil religion. Its economics are generally pro-market, but it's long been an apologist for the worst form of industrial socialism, the military state. It's against social engineering, but its leaders are technocrats and egalitarians who aspire to run the machinery of state therapy.

And that's not the worst of the problems. Modern conservatism was born in a broader movement of post-war internationalism that split off in two directions. The first—Scoop Jackson Democrats—wanted socialism at home and international activism, including foreign aid, the New World Order planning apparatus, and anti-Sovietism abroad. The second—Buckleyite conservatism—wanted to limit government expansion at home while conducting a globalist military campaign.

These were the only choices. What happened to old-fashioned Constitutionalism, states-rights devolutionism, and free-market libertarianism? They had been wiped out by the 2nd World War, which these groups opposed entering. They virtually died with Robert Taft. Conservative intellectuals went with the Buckley crowd and *National Review*-style nationalism.

If Buckleyism had its troubles during the Cold War—it was statist by any historical standard—it has no meaning during these dissolutionist times, when government doesn't matter in people's lives anymore. Government intrudes on us in a thousand ways, like a neighborhood bully, but it doesn't dominate the culture as it did only ten years ago. The world that bred and nurtured Buckleyism has passed us by. His nationalist paradigm is utterly irrelevant for the new realities.

Conservatism of his variety wouldn't even exist anymore but for the highly subsidized professional punditry class that lives and breathes the culture of government. These are the people who staff the think tanks no one in their own backyard takes seriously as intellectual forces. These are the op-ed writers whose ideological formation is governocentric; they wouldn't know what to write if they weren't commenting, pro or con, on the recent meanderings of Gingrich, Lott, Clinton, or Reno.

Buckleyism has no meaning during these dissolutionist times.

Buckley himself seems to have recognized this. A few years ago, he wrote his two most gruesome books. One was on the immediate need for a national service program, that is, the draft for a domestic army of social workers. The other was about public ethics, and how we all need to reconstruct our brains to ensure we are sufficiently respectful of and compliant with the demands of victimological liberals. But political ethics and national service don't cut it anymore, so to keep his voice alive he has turned to the most intimate subject of all: our relationship with God. Even Buckley, always the marketing whiz, recognized the turn towards private life inherent in post-Cold War social and political life.

Con Game

It's been the constant theme of *Triple R* that we've entered into an entirely new era of politics. The Cold War focus on government, love of our leaders, and clamor for ideologies to justify big government, was entirely artificial. With the Cold War gone—and with it the justification for the U.S. empire at home and abroad—the cultural domination by government affairs has begun to vanish.

People no longer look to the central state, the democratic process, or the anti-sacraments of the civil religion as spiritual and cultural guideposts. The presidency, the Congress, and the courts have all shrunk from the high status they once held in public life.

If the American imperium is now seen as a ghastly waste of money, the domestic security state no longer provides security. Social Security is going bankrupt, with most of the young generation doubting they will ever see a dime. And rather than protect us from danger, agencies such as the BATF and the EPA appear as positive threats. Government is the enemy of the people, in everything from the FDA (which keeps helpful drugs off the market), to the EEOC (which harasses enterprise), to the Department of Education (which is devoted to destroying what's left of the public schools).

On the surface of American political life, we see mass indifference. Washington is one huge bore. But just below the surface, the bitter resentment against government that led to the Republican takeover of Congress remains, but with a difference. This time, the anger is not partisan. It is directed against the whole of government power, not just this or that aspect of the political machine.

A good indicator of public anger is how much the government fears the people. For two years, official Washington has been frozen into gridlock for fear of doing much of anything.

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Even slight missteps these days generate hard-drives full of angry emails, and bitter fights at town meetings.

What does it all mean? Everything, so far as the governability of the country is concerned. The democratic socialist system depends heavily on public confidence, even more so than a purely autocratic system. If confidence in the system is utterly abandoned, the government loses the power to dominate the culture, inspire trust, and compel assent. It loses the ability to bring about obedience, and without obedience, there is no power.

Compliance with the central state is falling dramatically.

The biggest fear of the tax police is that people will no longer comply "voluntarily." People have long made fun of the term "voluntary" as it applies to taxes, but there is an element of truth to the term. Government cannot enforce every one of its dictates by direct personal threat; it must depend on people's willingness to obey. That applies not only to taxes, but to the entire machinery of the modern state.

The state is made all the more vulnerable by its own bureaucratic inadequacies. A key reason socialism couldn't work is that no government can possibly run society to the extent the planners claim they can. The same is true of the mixed economy. Bureaucracies are barely able to manage a town of 25,000. It's absurd to suggest that the Department of Health and Human Services can manage the lives of 250 million. It can't happen; there are too many technical difficulties to overcome even if the employees had the incentive to work.

Outrunning the Planners

Already, compliance with the central state is falling dramatically, as people increasingly enter alternative private structures to adjudicate disputes, educate their children, and conduct commerce. Most of what the government claims it controls–like international trade–it does not control. But it is crucial from the standpoint of the power elite that people believe that it does, because without the myth, power crumbles. The story of the Wizard behind the curtain turns out to have a poignant political application.

The outstanding political fact of our times turns out to be the depoliticization of society. This fact, more than any other, is the basis for optimism about the prospects for freedom. Second in line comes the spread of radical ideas about freedom and property rights, which is a result of the spread of alternative media. Third in line is the explosive growth of the international economy, which has created alternative social structures of allegiance and exchange that are disconnected from the nation-state and its rulers.

The important people these days are not political figures but men and women whose reputations and fortunes have been made outside of government and are thereby untainted by it. The important political movements these days are those that radically question fundamental structures of control that have dominated our country for more than a hundred years.

The important economic movements also exist outside government: they are the explosive growth of all-private communities, the boom in Internet commerce, the shift of the financial sector to non-bank investment strategies, and the growth of small businesses and multinational companies for whom government is little more than a nuisance.

The speed of technological change is an important factor in making this possible. It takes a while for the producers of new technologies to organize themselves into cartels that enjoy government privilege. First they must have a lock on production of the new good or service and that good or service must not have close substitutes. Only then can they go about creating regulatory agencies and using them to advance their interests. This is how industries such as railroads, automobiles, and aviation came to be controlled by government.

But the high-tech revolution has taken a different course, of free markets instead of government planning. The industry itself started off being highly government controlled. But the pace of progress has taken place so quickly that it has bypassed the ability of planners to control and cartelize it. The players in the industry themselves find they are too busy trying to keep their heads above the water of their competition to seek much in the way of government favors. By the time the Justice Department gets around to taking evidence in various bogus lawsuits of losers against gainers, technology has passed them by.

The most anti-government sector of workers in society is in the computer industry. These are people who revel in outwitting the government's plans to read all our email and break into our financial communications. They write passionately about the need to keep Internet commerce untaxed. They openly call for the overthrow of government to be replaced by the undesigned order of the Web marketplace.

Moreover, the technological gains enjoyed in the computer industry are not specific to one sector. Like the industrial revolution itself, they are changing the way we live our lives, from how we shop, to what we read, to how we manage our finances, to

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where we work, to how we learn. No sector in society has been left untouched by the microprocessor and the boom in the Internet. It has taught an important lesson to everyone who is involved: it is not a consequence of government and its employees. They are not to be thanked, but rather condemned for continuing to get in the way.

What is the right political position for these new times? Actually, it is the old classical liberalism. We must be decentralist on politics; internationalist on economics; and radically anti-government, pro-family, and pro-property in ideology—that's the right mix for our times of declining prestige for the nation-state. But this is not an option being presented to us by the arbiters of respectable opinion, especially not within the conservative framework.

Conservatism's Response

The real question for any serious conservative these days is how we can go about furthering the depoliticization of society and finally throw off the parasitic class that makes its living by stealing our liberty and property. But that is not a question conservatives are prepared to deal with, and for two reasons.

First, modern conservatism has no theory of the state. Second, the leaders of the movement are not really interested in throwing off state control and depoliticizing society because their very lives are wrapped up with politics. Their futures depend on the survival of the nation-state and the continuation of the anachronism of nationalism itself.

These points were driven home by the remarkable experience with the 104th Congress. At two moments, it appeared that the entire system would come unraveled. In January and February of 1995, a tax-cut bidding war broke out between the White House and the new Congress, with each promising to slash taxes further. The punditry class flew into a panic. So did the Republican elites. After about ten days of increasingly vehement promises to give the American people back their money, John Kasich stepped into the fray and called the whole thing off, much to the relief of the power elite.

The second crisis moment came later in the year with the famous shutdown of the government. We are always hearing how much the people resented this shutdown, but there's no evidence that this was true. Indeed the opposite happened. Aside from a few monuments, a government art gallery, the federal parks, and the passport office, government wasn't missed at all. Leviathan was asleep and for a few glorious weeks, the people learned that life went on.

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The panic that set in on the Republican side was precisely that this message was being sent to the public. The so-called backlash against the government shutdown was entirely manufactured by the elites as an excuse to keep from fulfilling their election promises.

But ever since the utter failure of that congress, an extraordinary cynicism (entirely realistic, by the way) has overtaken public opinion. When Bob Dole promised tax cuts, the problem was not, as the media kept claiming, that his numbers didn't add up. It was that no one believed him, as even exit polls among his own voters demonstrated. Faith in the credibility of the political class had entirely collapsed. It's not likely to return for the duration. And thank goodness.

You might think that the loss of faith in government would work to the advantage of conservatism as a public ideology. But that's not the case. The varieties of conservatism being offered up by movement leaders in no way questions the centralist and nationalist strain that has dominated the movement for more than forty years. That is the key to its meltdown, and why it stands zero chance of recapturing the public imagination.

No Choices

A very silly website called Intellectual Capital (www.intellectualcapital.com) recently polled its readers on what kind of conservatism they thought the Republican Party ought to adopt. What's interesting is not the results (since there were only about 150 people who took the poll), but the breakdown of ideological groupings IC offered its readership. The choices illustrate conservatism's meltdown better than any typology I've seen in years.

1. National Greatness Conservatism.
2. Libertarianism
3. Cultural Christian Conservatism
4. Supply Side Economics
5. None of the Above

On the plus side, note the absence of "national security conservatism" or foreign-policy centered ideological approaches. Say you favor expanding Nato, going to war in Bosnia, beating up on China, and stopping tribal wars in Africa with American guns and blood. Such a choice is not offered.

This is an extraordinary change in an ideology that has thrived for four decades on its reputation for a hawkish foreign policy, which once saw Grenada and the Gulf War as its finest moments. At least some aspects of

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conservatism have served as the ultimate ideological garb for the national security state and military socialism. Now, that garb has been tossed aside. Let's consider the remaining choices.

1. National Greatness Conservatism. This is the newest addition to the conservative mind, courtesy of the *Weekly Standard*'s insane campaign to bring back national socialism. *Triple R* was the first to expose this malevolent attempt to resurrect the religion of government power. When Bill Kristol and David Brooks debuted their new theory in the *Wall Street Journal* the result was a flood of letters in opposition (the *Journal* published only a few), but none in support.

On national statism, Buchananites and Kristolians are in full agreement.

This didn't come through in the *Journal*, but in their writings in their own magazine it was clear that National Greatness didn't stem from any philosophic commitment. The purpose of their new brand of conservatism is to revive the nation-state from its doldrums, get people to pay attention to politics again, and generally drum up support for government power.

It was a long shot, and they surely knew it. But it hasn't come close to working. Not even Republican regulars and movement conservatives—who tend to be easily tricked by the passing ideological fancy so long as it is promoted by a big name in the movement—took the bait. As a slogan, National Greatness became the butt of jokes faster than it inspired genuine interest. Greatness? From the jerks in Washington?

The ultimate irony of National Greatness Conservatism is who's behind the coalition to revive the politicized society. The neoconservatives, of course. But also an ideology that was originally born in opposition to neoconservatism: Buchananism. Pat's patriotism is increasingly a caricature of itself, promoting industrial statism and nation worship just as the Kristol version does. He speaks of "America" as if it were a unified collectivist state, not an environment of freedom as the framers conceived of it. His political formation took place during the Cold War and in his own way, he hasn't been able to shake this frame of mind.

Buchananites and Kristolians have differences on trade policy and social policy, but on the central concern of our time—the place of government and national statism in public and private life—they are in full agreement. They are all centralists and nationalists anxious to restore a sense of collective politico-cultural homogenization. When was the last time that Buchanan seemed ahead of the depoliticization curve instead of behind it with puffed-up rhetoric about America's collective interests?

2. Libertarianism. This word means different things to different people. In the best sense, it implies radical decentralization and a Rothbardian concern with liberty and property. Sadly, this is not the definition that has prevailed. As a consequence of the Charles Murray and David Boaz books on the subject—as well as the cultural predilections of those who use the term as their self-identifier—the word has come to mean license through centralization.

For example, let's say a small town in Ohio wanted strict laws against drugs and pornography, and wall-to-wall cops to protect people against crime. The libertarian should say: well, there's more freedom in allowing local communities to do what they want than in forcing "liberty" on people from above. But that's not what libertarians tend to say. They adhere to a theory of universal rights, centrally enforced.

Sadly, libertarianism has been transformed into yet another national ideology, imposing a version of liberty on people whether they like it or not. Libertarianism at its worst would actually mean the end of liberty because it would mean the end of local and self government. It's not a viable option in a time when all forms of nation-state-based ideological inventions appear as threats to liberty—especially given who and what would be charged with enforcing it.

3. Cultural Christian Conservatism. This means, of course, the Christian right. Here again we must make a huge distinction between the grassroots—mostly people who hate the government and want to be left alone—and the leadership, which is constantly wandering into policy gimmickry. The campaign against China is only the most recent diversion. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act—a meddlesome and blatantly unconstitutional law—was another. School vouchers are a disastrous redistributionist scheme, backed by virtually all the Christian right leaders. And the idea of the morons, liars, and thieves that make up Washington enforcing virtue across the entire country is a dangerous absurdity.

The Christian right has always lacked a theory of the state, which means it lacks a clear goal consistent with the demands of our time. And while the movement into politics has had some blessings, it always threatens to draw people away from what should be their primary concern in the realm of their relationship to God: their own churches, which are threatened by invasive secular influences.

A variant of this style of conservatism is the cultural neoconservatism

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of the *Commentary* model. Music critic Terry Teachout has been a leader. He laments the fracturing of the unity culture of the early 1960s, when we all watched the same news programs, focused on the same news events (the prospects of nuclear incineration, the moon shot, and various assassinations), and listened to the same music.

Why is this unity culture something to be desired? He never makes the argument, but it has something to do with the fracturing of the "national consensus" in favor of the welfare-warfare state. He complains that people have too many choices today, and that there are too many niche markets. But he should look back before the 1960s. Regionalism and niche markets are the very essence of American freedom. Unitary culture is an artifice created in the aftermath of World War 2, and it's thankfully crumbling.

Unitary culture is an artifice created in the aftermath of World War 2, and it's thankfully crumbling.

4. Supply Side Economics. Tax cuts are great. But when was the last time that Supply Siders came out for all-out, revenue-losing cuts in taxes? Mostly these days, they are consumed with the "tax reform" racket, meaning the flat tax, the national sales tax, the VAT, or some other scheme to extract more money from the public with less pain for the government. Give me the Supply Siders over the Republican regulars in love with "revenue neutrality," but an arcane tax doctrine is no substitute for a political philosophy.

What's left for those–and they are growing in number–who don't want the central state to adopt a new governing philosophy, but would rather it vanish from their lives if it can't be curtailed by the Constitution? Conservatism as it is usually understood offers nothing. It is too tied to the governing elite to have any relevance for our present times when the momentum for depoliticization seems unstoppable.

Compare conservatism with the systems of thought created by the great American political thinkers, John Randolph, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Jay Nock, William Graham Sumner, and Murray N. Rothbard, just to cite a few examples. Here were real champions of freedom, not of the top down model, of the theory that government is an enemy, not the protector, of civilization. Who in public life today, besides Ron Paul in Congress, best represents this political tradition?

Is Forbes Our Man?

There is only one voice in presidential politics that seems to articulate this message, that of Steve Forbes. He is far from being a movement conservative, and he has dramatically polished up his act since the last time around. His stump speech is unfailingly anti-government, pro-property, and pro-family autonomy.

He is wrong on many issues (the big one: immigration). He's still infatuated with policy gimmicks like vouchers and Social Security privatization. But this is not what animates his speeches and certainly not what has made him the only candidate in either party who has garnered any interest on the part of grassroots political activists.

He's not of Washington, but the private sector. He's got the money to run without having to court special interests. He's appropriately decentralist in his orientation. He understands economics. And so far, he has not made foreign policy part of his campaign.

He may not be the man to bring down the Leviathan, but neither is he likely to attempt to restore national statism either. His candidacy bears watching, for now. That's not to say he shouldn't be criticized at the first appearance of a slipup–this publication has done its share. And if he ever becomes president, it will become morally incumbent on all of us to shift into the Down With the Presidency mode.

But Forbes compares favorably to nationalists like Dan Quayle, who recently warned an audience that we'd better start paying attention to foreign policy, else it will take a generation to recover from this "isolationist error." He compared China today with Germany 100 years ago, and suggested we get on the stick in opposing China's evil. And recall that at the recent gathering of the Christian Coalition, Quayle called the family tax credit–the one slight tax break, however tiny, that we've received in 15 years–"social engineering at its worst." Its worst!

No More Nationalisms

The key to understanding our new era of politics is that the presidency just doesn't matter anymore. What we seek is the end of the presidency, the end of national politics, and of federal power generally.

Whether Forbes can really assist the devolutionist process, it remains true that the future of liberty does not depend on a political movement. It depends on cultural, intellectual, and social factors that continue to lead people away from official state institutions and into the private and commercial pursuits that are not of, by, or for the state.

The only political agenda worth pursuing is that of the wrecker ball –taken to every bureaucracy within the Beltway, and every one of its adjuncts in the rest of the country. Everything else

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is not only a waste of time and an anachronism, a word that applies in spades to the conservative movement RRR.

THE SEVENTH SIGN

Justin Raimondo

In an act that perfectly symbolizes the New World Order our rulers are building for us, the United States has sent three "electronic warfare aircraft" to Bosnia in an effort to silence anti-Nato broadcasts by rebel Serbs. According to the *New York Times*, these planes are outfitted with equipment that "can jam local radio and television transmissions, as well as insert broadcasts of their own."

Censorship is as old as government itself, but this is a censor of a new type: one that not only represses popular sentiment but attempts to "insert" something else in its place.

In 1955 Garet Garrett observed that "We have crossed the boundary that lies between Republic and Empire." In his classic philippic, *Rise of Empire*, he enumerates the signs of empire: the centralization of power in the executive, the system of satellite nations, the subordination of domestic affairs to foreign policy, the ascendancy of the military mindset, and what he calls "a complex of vaunting and fear." All have come to pass. But nowhere did he imagine such an engine of Empire as the electronic warfare aircraft. In his classic pamphlet, Garrett counts six signs of Empire, but now we must add a seventh: the technology to control or at least direct the flow of information.

This technology is getting a test-run in Bosnia, where, after two years of relative quiet, with virtually no U.S. casualties, the Nato allies are embarked on a vigorous campaign to enforce the unworkable and unjust Dayton agreement, never signed by the Bosnian Serbs. Dayton set up a centralized state that is a model of multiculturalism, in which every level of government is reproduced in triplicate, and in which the dominance of the Muslims, over a region that has never been a unitary state, is assured.

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison has correctly pointed out that the imposition of the Dayton agreement on the warring parties was really an attempt to export multiculturalism and political correctness at gunpoint: and it is failing. All this is true, but the problem with Hutchison and other congressional conservative critics of Bosnia policy is that, while conceding that the goals of U.S. intervention are idealistic, their only objection to the achievement of such lofty aims is that the policy is impractical. In a September 15 appearance on the McNeil News Hour, Hutchison was confronted by administration pointman on Bosnia, Senator Joe Biden, who self-righteously squawked "Why can't we do what we know is the right thing in Bosnia?" In conceding the high moral ground to their opponents, noninterventionists have fatally undermined their own case.

U.S. Out of Bosnia!

If the U.S.-Nato military occupation of the region is an exercise in "idealism," then it is a totalitarian ideal that is being upheld, which has resulted in Nato's war on free speech in Bosnia. In the northern Bosnian town of Udrigovo, American troops stormed and captured the local television transmitter. The transmitter was returned to the custody of its Serbian owners only when they promised to give air time to pro-Nato Serbian quislings, and "to stop the television's constant vilification of Nato."

In the week prior to the mid-September municipal elections, according to the *New York Times*, senior officials in Washington were reported to be "considering shutting down Bosnia's press, mostly controlled by hardliners, if it does not curb its extremist rhetoric and respect the demands of the Dayton agreement."

In Banja Luka, Nato troops joined with supporters of Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plasvic to prevent supporters of ex-President Radovan Karadzic from holding a political rally. Nato troops and Plasvic's political police set up a blockade, but hundreds evaded it and converged on a Banja Luka hotel for the event. With Nato's support, the police then cut telephone lines, power, and water, and blocked the street in front of the hotel. Among those trapped inside was the elected Serbian representative on Bosnia's presidential triumvirate, Momcilo Krajisnik. While the co-president of Bosnia managed to escape relatively unscathed, along with his dozens of bodyguards, 62 rallygoers were taken to a nearby Nato base and checked to see if any had been indicted by the UN War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague.

The program of the War Party is openly totalitarian. Anthony Lewis, writing in his *New York Times* column, urges the Nato troops on to even greater feats of outright repression. The "logic" of Nato's aggressiveness "requires" us to "shut down the Karadzic propaganda machine." What is the great crime of the Bosnian Serbian media? According to Lewis, they are "pouring out messages of hate."

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But what is the exact content of these "hate messages"? As British troops, backed by American helicopter fighters, moved into the Bosnian Serb town of Banja Luka and took over police stations and the local television station, the rebel-controlled media, broadcasting from their stronghold in Pale, correctly characterized Nato troops as "an occupation force"–and what else are they?–and went on to comment on what everyone acknowledges to be the facts: that Nato was intervening in an internal dispute between the elected Assembly of the Republika Srpska, and its ostensible President, Biljana Plavsic.

Pale compared Plavsic to Mussolini and opined that, while "these events can be considered a state coup," they are "much more than that actually, because now it is obvious that what is at work here is an attempt at foreign occupation with the help of domestic collaborators."

The censorious zeal of liberal interventionists was too much even for the *New York Times*, which editorialized that "using the tools of dictators to bring peace to Bosnia is offensive to American principles and is bound to backfire." These techniques, all too reminiscent of Communist repression, "can only make citizens there doubt the difference between democracy and dictatorship."

The warhawks responded with outrage. In a jointly-signed letter to the *Times*, Aryeh Neier, longtime "human rights" activist, and Morton I. Abramovitch, of the International Crisis Group, wrote: "It is odd that when the future of peace in Bosnia is at a critical moment, you should be so concerned with protecting freedom of speech for the Pale clique."

Neier, formerly of Human Rights Watch, is now in the employ of neocon billionaire George Soros, who has been pushing for U.S. military intervention in Bosnia through a series of front-groups, such as the American Committee to Save Bosnia and the Balkan Institute, among others. That Neier, now serving as president of the Sorosian thinktank, an outfit that goes under the name of the Open Society Institute, is now the country's most militant advocate of censorship tells us something about the times we are living in.

It is "dangerous," they write, to "misapply" the First Amendment to Bosnia, because "this is Srpska, not Skokie." The Serbians have no rights because "when a group holds power, [and] has used that power to silence opponents and foment violence, it has no legitimate basis for invoking support from defenders of freedom of expression." To expose the stunning hypocrisy of this position it is necessary only to apply the same standard to the Nato-U.S. occupiers. Certainly the occupation army holds power, now exercised by the ultra-interventionist General Wesley Clark, and is using that power to "silence opponents."

Neocon billionaire George Soros has been pushing for military action in Bosnia.

Without a doubt, as we have seen, Nato has fomented (that is, initiated) violence in Bosnia. The Neir-Abramovitch principle, consistently applied, could just as easily be invoked by Karadzic to justify repression of pro-Nato Bosnian Serbs.

For years, various groups devoted to promoting "tolerance" and "human rights" have been agitating for restrictions on "hate speech." While the campaign has been successful in Canada and parts of Europe, until recently it made no headway in the United States except on college campuses. Today this campaign is being enforced at gunpoint by U.S. troops in Bosnia. As electronic warfare aircraft fly over Banja Luka, blocking forbidden transmissions and "inserting" their own propaganda, the inevitable question arises: how long before those same planes are flying over American cities, silencing "hate speech" and substituting the propaganda of "love" –especially love of the federal government?

In the multicultural New World Order, policed by American troops under extra-national command, there is no sin greater than that of separation, i.e., the desire for self-government–and, in Bosnia, the punishment is swift and merciless. An example must be made.

Like the map of Africa, which was carved up by the Great Powers during the colonial period, the map of Central

Dean of the Austrian School of economics, American historian, founder of modern libertarianism, and restorer of the Old Right, Murray N. Rothbard (1926–1995) was a one-man army of liberty. The *Triple R* is inspired by his spirit, and dedicated to his vision.

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There is no stemming the rising tide of anti-government "hate speech."

and Eastern Europe, drawn by the same Powers, takes little heed of ethno-religious, cultural, and political realities. This is why the doctrine of "collective security" is so dangerous, especially in the volatile environment of the post-cold war world: for it commits the United States to enforcing the status quo, in Bosnia and around the world, no matter how unjust or unrealistic.

The liberation of the former Yugoslavia from the Communist yoke did not address the basic injustice of subject peoples held in political, cultural, and even linguistic thralldom by the overlords of a centralized state. The Croats, Muslims, and Macedonians opted out of the South Slav federation, leaving only tiny Montenegro to maintain the old Yugoslav shell. The great problem is that, within these entities, are still smaller ethno-religious splinters that seek to secede from the secessionists.

Whatever the justice or injustice of present national boundaries in Eastern and Central Europe, American policymakers must answer the following question: is the United States now intending to set itself up as the arbiter of such matters? Will we sit in judgment of the Ruthenian claims to Wallachia, the Romanian claim to Transylvania, or the national aspirations of the Iskrians? In carrying out the military occupation of the Balkans, do we mean to take the place of Soviet occupiers as the enforcers of ethnic order?

Americans will never tolerate such a policy–and, in the event our rulers are too dim-witted to realize that, it will take a lot more than electronic warfare aircraft buzzing the rooftops of American cities to stem the rising tide of anti-government "hate speech." RRR

PK: Too Late, Too Little

Hilary Ryan

Guys have always been a little bit thick. Only now do they realize that the Summer of Love has ended. Only now–after the rise of gender feminism and *True Love Waits*, sordid tales of military libidos and the success of *The Rules*–do men figure out that they can't always get what they want: namely, sex without commitment.

Make no mistake. Sex is exactly what's behind the Promise Keepers phenomenon. Sure a lot of guys went to enjoy a rare chance to hang out with other men, now that all-male schools and clubs are a punishable crime. But all that bawling is not over guilt for the diapers left for the wife to change, intractable racism, or "working" late. The life force behind the penitential extravaganza in Washington was men's collective need to pay off the wages of carnal sin.

Men–married, single, divorced–got together for a national hug-in to be cleansed of the misdeeds that a thirty-year-old social experiment said hurt no one. The sexual frolics of the sixties–of both the college dorm and Saigon brothel variety–didn't turn out to be free. Men have paid a price in disease, sterility, aborted offspring, bitter ex-lovers, divorced wives, estranged children, and unhappy marriages. There never was a bigger lie than "free love," but it is a lie that two generations of men wanted to believe.

Maybe it is just the natural law biting back. It's not possible to sever sex from its fundamental purposes of marital bonding and procreation, and end up a healthy and happily-married adult in a stable home. As serious thinkers from Thomas Aquinas to Sigmund Freud said, men have to be socialized into faithfulness and decency.

An insatiable appetite for sex leads to overindulgence, and ultimately personal humiliation and guilt. The family leadership, patriarchy, and racial reconciliation issues may command fleeting interest, but they are more useful in obfuscating the embarrassing root problem. That's why the broadly confessional tones of the Promise Keeper weekend remind us of an Overeaters Anonymous session.

Women began catching on to the lunacy of free sex about ten years ago. The so-called gender feminists realized that male sexuality, unleashed, hadn't helped women's advancement or brought them to Nirvana. Lothario's deflowering and subsequent dumping of virgins wasn't great for self-esteem either. Instead, it brought on a series of pathologies.

But by the late eighties, the social sanctions that had once contained the beast were gone, so these feminists turned to the law to shape men up. A girl's daddy wouldn't come after the guy with a shotgun and a preacher anymore, but the cad might find himself looking down the barrel of a harassment lawsuit.

In recent years the silent *Rules*-girl revolution turned women against doling out sexual favors without commitment. Today, compared with even five years ago, there are far fewer coed nit-

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wits who gush "Wow! He really likes me. He, like, wanted to sleep with me!" Sexuality is only useful when it lures men into chaste devotion and, ultimately, to the altar–that is *The Rules* subtext.

Neither is the tell-all confession the answer. I once knew a wastrel who slept with his wife's best friend. Full of remorse, he went to his pastor, who told him the path to propitiation was to confess to his wife. The man resisted, but finally trusted his counselor. Dumb. Very dumb. He told all on Tuesday and she divorced him on Wednesday.

Where's these guys' dignity? No wife wants to hear a teary confession.

Typical behavior for Promise Keepers. Where's these guys' dignity? No wife wants to hear a teary confession of sins of the flesh and unchecked fantasies. Mens' morals do need an overhaul, but please, don't toss the man out with the machismo.

A woman wants a man who can discipline himself in all respects, and that includes not announcing his weakness to her on a regular basis and not gallivanting around at weekend gatherings, reveling in the company of other reprobates.

Sadly, examples of settled gentlemanly confidence and goodness don't abound. Maybe that old guy on the street you see walking with his old wife who wears a dinky diamond ring, though there have been more prosperous times since the day he gave it to her. She's not a trophy, but they've weathered many hardships together.

He doesn't check his emotional temperature each morning or wonder if his wife really understands him. He doesn't seek strength from nationwide movements, but from his God and his responsibilities. And while he doesn't know how to change a diaper, he changes tires, and his wife never hauled trash to the curb either.

Unfortunately, such fine old men are not often looked to as role models. The generations who have tried to reinvent manliness lurch pathetically between testosterone-overloaded military types and effeminate wimps. The gentleman–the man of honor, peace, courage and self-restraint–has been completely abandoned, not to be brought back by the Promise Keepers model either. RRR

Hilary Ryan is the author of *The Gentleman's Way: The Guide to Dating and Romance*, a manuscript in search of a publisher.

CONSERVATIVE NON-AUTHORITIES

Paul Gottfried

It seems that arguments from authority are back in fashion, depending on one's authority. A recent essay in the *Weekly Standard* by Bill Kristol and David Brooks, written in defense of an expanding federal government as a conservative blessing, received considerable attention precisely because of its source.

Journalists and Republican Congressmen insisted that the *WS* editorializing had to be taken seriously because of the quintessentially conservative nature of the publication and the authors. In a syndicated column, Robert Novak challenged the "conservative" politicians who had gushed over the Kristol-Brooks defense of big government.

According to Novak, the carte blanche bestowed on the managerial state by Kristol and his pal was not a conservative gesture but revealed a "neoconservative" mindset. This politically incorrect distinction having been drawn, Novak went on to question the wisdom of movement conservatives being bowled over by any statement to which the Kristol name was attached.

Another example of the acceptance of dubious authority on the even more dubious right can be found in a collection of essays on ethics edited by the "moderate" feminist and recent *National Review* celebrity Christine Hoff Sommers. In this anthology, *Vice and Virtue*, Sommers deals critically with moral relativism. Such a position would supposedly rule out "universal human rights," as expressed by the UN's "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In her commentary Sommers underlines the inevitability of making a choice between relativist ethics and the higher truth enunciated by King in his "I Have a Dream" speech and foreshadowed by the UN statement on human rights. Both are reproduced as compelling moral documents, and in a gloss on King's plagiarized speech we are told that the exalted speaker appealed to his listeners' belief "in the universality and truth of Judeo-Christian moral principles." Though by no means a relativist, I was tempted to embrace the most extreme relativist position after I had read Sommers's argument from Kingism, an argument that can be summed up as "much to say about little."

Despite this excessive reverence for some authorities on the official right, one also finds on the same right

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that other authorities are not to be mentioned at all. For example, William F. Buckley, in a syndicated column, notes that Chester Finn of the Hudson Institute "put it nicely when he said all conservatives are opposed to any program that has the word 'national' in it, and the left opposes any 'test.'" Buckley's ritualistic praise of the neocon Finn and, by implication, of the neocon Hudson Institute, does not demonstrate that either authority is right in pushing for "national educational standards."

What Buckley's column does show is that there are those on the right (albeit no longer his) who oppose such standards for the same reason they oppose voucher plans. Moreover these critics may have a point, that the federal bureaucracy is "eroding the authority the community should have over its schools" and is "choking down real learning with multicultural goals." Though Buckley insists that this warning "comes much too late," he also notes that it is certainly "not frivolous," and should be heeded in any conservative evaluation of federal or state involvement in education.

What he fails to relate is who specifically is raising this salutary admonition. When it comes to naming names, Buckley is evasive, telling us only that "conservatives or at least many conservatives" are saying this or that. He also anthropomorphizes to avoid having to give specific names, as when he states that the "slippery-slope argument (about vouchers) is bouncing about with grave effect." Surely Buckley must know who the conservatives are who make such arguments, even if they happen to be paleolibertarians and were not invited to his conservative lovefest with Eliot Abrams and Margaret Thatcher.

Such conservative critics should have at least as much standing in this discourse as the neocon authorities whom Buckley pats on the back, without agreeing with. Why, for instance, could he not state that Jeff Tucker, Murray Rothbard, and Lew Rockwell "put it nicely" when they specifically made those points that Buckley found merit in? Why does he ignore those authorities that his arguments suggest are correct? Buckley's repression of unauthorized conservative names is consistent with the course he and other conservative journalists charted when they decided to ally themselves with "neocon authorities." Thereafter it became inconvenient to remember those names that their newly acquired masters had consigned to a memory hole—or to imaginary fever swamps. Better to remember only official names—those of p.c. conservatives who might be invited on to "Firing Line" and publicly mentioned as participants at one's conferences. As for the nonpersons being rejected, it must suffice to say that their good arguments bounce around without prominent human causes.

I was tempted to embrace the most extreme relativist position after I had read Sommers's argument from Kingism.

An equally troublesome question about who is or is not a conservative authority is occasioned by Charles Krauthammer's recent *Washington Post* syndicated column. In this commentary on the "conservatives lament," one might expect Krauthammer to be crossing swords with the very intellectuals who have been lamenting a conservative derailment for at least a generation. Since we and Krauthammer know who they are, it is therefore strange that in a column like this those who should be featured prominently are never mentioned.

Instead, Krauthammer dwells on the whimsical conduct of his "favorite conservative magazine, the *Weekly Standard*" (which incidentally pays him generously as an advisor to its minicon editors). Of late the magazine's editors have begun to debate the possibility of a "worldwide conservative crack-up," and Krauthammer is concerned lest they forget that "conservatism is actually winning."

Daunted by the fact that in Europe and the United States "conservative governments are being replaced by nonconservative ones," Krauthammer's charges have grown "pessimistic." And so he points out the heartening signs of the time: such as the "worldwide ascendancy of democratic capitalism" and that in both Britain and the United States "the liberal party has shed its liberalism in order to win electoral office."

Again the point is not to skewer a dishonest neocon argument by retorting with the obvious: that democratic capitalism means social democracy with markets and that both liberal and conservative parties today stand well to the left. In fact it is impossible to understand Krauthammer's idiosyncratic use of "conservative," except by making it identical with everything he likes, from dropping atomic bombs on defenseless Japanese cities and loving the Likud Party to building a federal welfare state in the U.S.

But most annoying here is Krauthammer's treatment of the *Weekly Standard* as the indispensable "conservative" authority, beside which other such authorities pale into insignificance. As in the case of the congressmen described by Robert Novak,

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who rush to embrace big government because Bill Kristol told them it's okay, Krauthammer exerts himself mightily explaining that even those oracles he venerates occasionally slip up.

Though he fails in this column to bring in MLK as a rightwing authority (something that he as well as Christina Sommers has done repeatedly), Krauthammer at least does not have to imitate Buckley, by ignoring real conservatives and real conservative authorities. He simply gives the impression that there is no one on the relevant right except for minicons and himself: or, to put it more accurately, except for beneficiaries of Rupert Murdoch, who payrolls the *Weekly Standard* (and recently joined the board of the Cato Institute). RRR

WHAT HAPPENED TO NOZICK?

Michael Levin

For many of us in the early 1970s, Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* was the first sustained defense of the free market we had ever read. After decades of bombardment by the Old and New Left about the evils of capitalism, here was an obviously brilliant thinker with unimpeachable Establishment credentials–a Harvard philosophy professor, no less–praising rights to trade and free association, a night watchman role for government, and natural inequalities.

Agitated as I was about affirmative action and the insanity of feminism, but committed to the more abstract areas of philosophy, *Anarchy* led me to think seriously about political theory for the first time. It no doubt had a similar effect on many others; along with Murray Rothbard, Walter Block, and the Friedmans, Nozick was one of the figures who rehabilitated small-l liberalism in the pre-Reagan years.

Unfortunately, while his subsequent academic career has more than fulfilled its early promise, his views on social issues have become increasingly conventional. Whatever it is that reduces once-bold thinkers to uttering acceptable pap, Nozick is now a captive of the dark side of the force. He has become another opponent of liberty and good sense.

Nozick has become another opponent of liberty and good sense.

To be sure, there were warning signs even in *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. As many critics (including Murray Rothbard) noted, its basic assumptions, namely property rights and the wrongness of unprovoked aggression, are entirely undefended. This was not a huge flaw, since following premises wherever they lead is an honorable practice in philosophy, and Nozick drew out the evils of anti-liberal doctrines with great flair. Yet this year's truism, left without support, can become next year's discarded error.

Moreover, as again Rothbard and others pointed out, Nozick's own deduction of a "minimal state" was not exactly watertight or fully consistent with his own professed principles, but again his heart was obviously in the right place.

More troubling was *Anarchy*'s extended plea for animal rights. The topic of animals is only remotely connected to liberty–we are talking about *human* society, after all–and Nozick's discussion felt shoehorned in, as if he were using the occasion to grind some private axe. (It was surely no coincidence that Nozick had become a vegetarian just prior to writing the book.) This odd detour left the impression of a weakness for trendy nonsense.

Most bothersome, though, was Nozick's prose. While in some ways he was that rarity among academic writers, a dexterous stylist, he was not exactly easy to read. Part of the reason was simply that the thoughts he was trying to convey are very complex. Not that he was pedantic; quite the opposite–he showed a real feel for the vernacular. He effortlessly threw out memorable phrases ("capitalist acts between consenting adults"). But he also reveled in needlessly complex, involuted formulations and verbal curlicues. There were digressions, and digressions within digressions. Hardly a sentence went by uninterrupted by one or more parenthetical asides. One critic remarked apropos the absence of a foundation for Nozick's views, "instead of arguments, he gives us parentheses."

Then there were the proliferating footnotes, presented in two flavors. The more discursive ones were put at the bottom of the page, the marginally less discursive at the end of the book. An academic note is usually inserted to qualify, hedge, and otherwise protect its author from saying anything definite, but Nozick's serve an opposite function. Just after laying out what the reader would take to be an exhaustive statement of some thought, Nozick calls time to mention six variations, five generalizations, and three open problems, all of which razzle-dazzle reminds the reader of the author's cleverness. Here

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Nozick: Civil rights laws are good. So are killer inheritance taxes. The state should protect people's "self-conception."

too began Nozick's particular fondness for footnotes that show how an idea can refer to itself.[1]

Philosophical Explanations, Nozick's next book in 1981, cemented his stature as a philosopher. His swipes at civil rights legislation in *Anarchy* had encouraged me to think of him as someone open-minded enough to accept biological race differences and prestigious enough to perhaps persuade others to think about them. That hope was dashed by a tortured footnote deep in *Explanations* where Nozick addressed the topic. He seemed to say—his uncharacteristic bobbing and weaving made it hard to be sure—that people should not look at evidence for race differences unflattering to blacks lest they "fall...into wanting there to be such race differences," a desire he defined as "racist."[2]

Another little cloud had appeared on the horizon.

The clouds became a thunderhead in Nozick's next and least successful book, *The Examined Life* (1989), a loose collection of essays ranging from "Sexuality" to "The Matrix of Reality." It was here that Nozick elevated the Holocaust to cosmological significance. But it was also here that, in a few short pages, Nozick repudiated everything in *Anarchy*. Civil rights laws are good. So are killer inheritance taxes. The state should protect people's "self-conception." A proper evaluation of capitalism must recognize its "underside" of deception, dangerous products, and "international predation." 1975's truism had indeed become 1989's error.

Nozick's about-face owed nothing to the voluminous criticism *Anarchy* had received from the left, a point I will return to. (This criticism consisted, predictably enough, of the supposed malign consequences of market freedom.) His innovative rationale for civil rights laws was now that they symbolize "our equal human dignity...our human solidarity."

One way a society as a whole can express its "bonds of concern" with blacks, women, Jews, "Native American Indians," homosexuals, and Armenians is by denying its members the liberty to discriminate against these groups, or even—Nozick tiptoes up to this—offend them. He cites Nazis marching through a Jewish neighborhood as impermissible behavior, forgetting *Anarchy*'s own implied remedy for such provocations, namely private streets. Just as I may evict Nazis from my house, I can keep them off streets I own. The state need not curb assembly.

The main question, though, is by what right those who feel no solidarity with homosexuals or Armenians may be dragooned into expressing it by those who do. Anyone who feels at one with homosexuals may use what symbols he pleases to announce this, but shouldn't he leave it up to others whether to join him?

Nozick replies that, if discriminators were indulged, society could not condemn them with one voice. "[T]his would leave the rest of us ashamed of our society, whose public voice of concern is silent. That silence would then speak for us."

As for legal symbolism, where do you draw the line? Should we add an Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution because it symbolizes "equity for women," no matter what the legal consequences might be? Should we retain even counterproductive drug laws because they express the commendable message that drugs are bad?

In Nozick's most recent book, *The Nature of Rationality*, his trot to orthodoxy has become a sprint. By now he is applauding multiculturalism on the grounds that, although the "women and minority members" inserted into college curricula are less talented than the white males they displace, they are more talented than most students, so reading them is educational—it does not occur to him that many multi-culti writers now treated as the equal of

1. Like this one.

2. Why "racist"? Because of being blamed for all black failures, many whites now hope that black shortcomings turn out to be due to innate race differences, just as a defendant in a negligence case hopes the plaintiff's injury can be shown to be congenital. Such a desire does not deserve to be called bad names.

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Shakespeare, such as Maya Angelou, are *less* talented than the average college student.

But the big change is the greatly increased importance of Nozick's ideological commitments. Annoying as they were, previously they had been mere asides and obiter dicta incidental to the main lines of philosophical argument. In *Rationality* they assume control.

A bit of preparation is in order. Another old philosophical conundrum is: when should a proposition be believed? The standard, natural answer is that it should be believed if the evidence for it is strong enough, and if not, not. The tricky bit is telling when evidence is sufficiently strong. But recall that footnote in *Philosophical Explanations* against thinking about race differences lest it have a bad effect on you, and the idea of civil rights laws as symbols. These two notions now come to the fore. Nozick's new theory is that you should not believe a proposition *even when the evidence supports it* unless doing so is "valuable." You must also consider the practical consequences of a belief, what it indicates about you, and its "symbolic utility." In other words, no matter what the facts before you are, don't believe them if it might mean you are a bad person, or if it is the sort of thing other bad people are known to believe.

There is very little going for Nozick's odd analysis beyond rationalizing defiance of the evidence for race differences. What makes me fairly sure that this is a big part of his motivation was his extended use of the race example to explain his new doctrine at a talk I attended a couple of years ago. For Nozick, the aim of epistemology has become to provide excuses for never opening *The Bell Curve*.

I believe the key to this sea change does lie in the attacks to which *Anarchy* was subject, but not in the way you might suppose. I am no psychologist, and I have only the slightest personal acquaintance with the man, but I would guess that Nozick's trouble with the reception of *Anarchy* was not that so many people disagreed with it–no surprise there–but that so many people *agreed*. How can you stay ahead of the curve once you have become the curve? Answer: by rejecting *Anarchy*, but for reasons, however feeble, that had not occurred to anyone else, foe or friend. As Hegelians might say, a beautiful dialectical synthesis.

If one theme runs through all Nozick's writing, it is that he is the cleverest kid in class. But maintaining this status creates relentless pressure to pull the rug out from under expectations. Are you known for great rigor? Then find deep meaning in the gibberish of Heidegger. And above all, if you made your name as a defender of individual liberty, then disconcert everyone by suddenly finding wisdom in the nostrums of the left. In some such way as this, I suspect, Nozick was tamed, or, more accurately, tamed himself. RRR

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